

Bernd's folk lyrics


How can you tell if particular lyrics are actually folk lyrics? Unsurprisingly, the simple answer is: you can't! I have recorded several folk songs myself, and Martin Götz and I have written another title, "farewell", together, so at least with regard to these songs I can state convincingly that their lyrics must be Folk, indeed. Then there are a few similar titles that have not been set to music yet which I consider Folk as well. For example, there are my mythological lyrics which in my humble opinion agree quite nicely with folk tunes.

In this collection I have also added quite a few additional lyrics that I also think might agree well with folk music. Several of them actually have music to them, albeit music of a different genre. Most were recorded by myself, some have been adapted by MotorPlanet, the Blues-Rock trio I usually write for. But maybe I'm wrong, or maybe there are actually many more lyrics that would go well with folk tunes. Don't nail me down on the criteria for choosing particular lyrics for this collection while leaving out others. Basically it's a matter of gut feeling. But then, isn't it always?

Bernd

And here's the legal stuff:



All my come with a creative commons license  which means that you may use these lyrics as long as their usage is not commercial, in other words: "no money – no problem". Just credit me for the part that I have contributed, i.e. the lyrics, if you set them to music yourself, or lyrics and music if you 'cover' one of my songs. If you intend to produce songs on CD, sell songs over the internet, perform them on a professional scale, or include all or part of the texts in a book, you should contact me under my eMail address: Bernd.Harmsen@web.de (don't worry, you will never have to make any payments to me, licensing is the concern of PRO's and MRO's - performing rights organizations and mechanical rights organizations – I just need to know, so I can register the songs in question with the GEMA, the German PRO).

I use to publish all my lyrics on my web site: <http://bernd-harmsen.de>. Refer to this site if you are interested in my latest lyrics or any corrections or changes to existing ones

Bernd Harmsen
Herrenberg / Germany
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farewell

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farewell

(Music: Martin Götz; Words: Bernd Harmsen)

the shadows grow longer
the sun's on the decline
the sky will be burning
and the Gods will resign
I am so tired now
but I'm still feeling fine

so, farewell
farewell, you loved ones
keep my memory
farewell
farewell my lover
and think kindly of me

and I gather my friends
reach for my wife's hand
the time that we've shared
's been incredibly grand
my long years' companions
everything has to end

so, farewell
farewell, you loved ones
keep my memory
farewell
farewell my lover
and think kindly of me

and I'll move towards the light
'cause I have ceased to fight
since quite a while
and if you note my smile
you will know that I am glad
'cause I have had
the best of times one could expect
'cause I've known you

so, farewell
farewell, you loved ones
keep my memory
farewell
farewell my lover
and think kindly of me

close your eyes

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

don't you feel embarrassed by the porn shows
they call their daily news
I wonder how you can stand this endless
sequence of abuse

did you ever notice the smile of good friends
that never reached their eyes
did you ever sense their suppressed worries
or hear their silent cries

at times you need to close your eyes
to get a clearer view
behind the scenes we call reality
sometimes you would get off your mind,
you'd sing and dance and you'd
act like crazy just to prove your sanity

have you ever watched the sun burn his way
through the morning mist
did you know that in the place called hell
beauty does exist

at times you need to close your eyes
to get a clearer view
behind the scenes we call reality
sometimes you would get off your mind,
you'd sing and dance and you'd
act like crazy just to prove your sanity

don't let the time pass away
without offering this day
one of your precious smiles
to take away

at times you need to close your eyes
to get a clearer view
behind the scenes we call reality
sometimes you would get off your mind,
you'd sing and dance and you'd
act like crazy just to prove your sanity

doomsday morn

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

all's been said that was to say
the colors all have turned to grey
the new day arrives stillborn
'cause today is doomsday morn

fears are weighing heavily
of looming possibilities
of dashed hopes and shattered dreams
the will to live's run out of steam

and we prey to our Gods
with their thousand names
we are so shaken
we've stopped playing games
many wish that they were never born
'cause today is doomsday morn

we've laid waste to fertile lands
our industry got out of hand
all countries now are paralyzed
no options left to euphemize

and we prey to our Gods
with their thousand names
we are so shaken
we've stopped playing games
many wish that they were never born
'cause today is doomsday morn

Ganymede

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

guarding the sheep was a beautiful boy
the pride of his parents - this young prince from Troy
a delight to the eye of the passers by
his beauty so blinding that they'd want to cry

the God cast an eye on him, the God fell in love
he abducted the boy and he carried him off
in the guise of an eagle to his home in the height
to keep him as servant and make love in the night

your immortal beauty will always enchant
Gods and the men who dare open their eyes
your youth, your frankness, your grace, and your charm
place love beyond pettiness, morals and lies

beautiful horses as pay for the king
Hermes, God's messenger, the next day would bring
to placate the father, the ruler of Troy
that he'd never again would be seeing his boy

your immortal beauty will always enchant
Gods and the men who dare open their eyes
your youth, your frankness, your grace, and your charm
place love beyond pettiness, morals and lies

will you stand by yourself
do you think you can cope and
overcome thought control
and come out in the open

your immortal beauty will always enchant
Gods and the men who dare open their eyes
your youth, your frankness, your grace, and your charm
place love beyond pettiness, morals and lies

Gilgamesh

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

let your gaze wander
from the top of the wall
over the blooming land
over courtyards, fountains, and flower beds

let your thoughts wander
and make sure to recall
the time of glory and
the great king of kings, called Gilgamesh

let your gaze wander
from the top of the wall
over the blooming land
over courtyards, fountains, and flower beds

let your thoughts wander
and make sure to recall
the time of glory and
the great king of kings, called Gilgamesh

bitter complaints 'bout the tyrannical king
who claimed for himself the right of the first night
and tried the young men's strength in the ring
reached the Gods who considered the plight

the Gods decided to send him a friend
equal in strength and equal in force
to share adventures, to share ideas
and in the long term alter his course

against all advice, in search of personal fame
Gilgamesh one day decided to kill
Humbaba, the dragon, who guarded the wood
- he was the king and he would get his will

though a sense of foreboding weighed the friends down
overcoming their fear they fought side by side
they showed no mercy, and slew the beast
so that their glory would shine far and wide

Ishdar, the goddess, fell in love with the king
rejecting her offer he brought on her revenge
she sent the Bull of Heaven to lay waste to the land
but the mighty, fierce beast was overcome by the friends

the Gods resolved that the friend had to die
so their punishment would hurt the king as well
who would stay with his friend till the body decayed
no sacrifice could make the Gods lift their spell

to avoid the fate of the friend he had lost
on his quest to find immortality
the king set off for places unknown
through the lightless tunnel, 'cross the endless sea

he'd heard of a plant that'd grant eternal youth
he found it, he picked it - now he could stop to roam
but the snake stole his prize, she's shed her skin ever since
he was still empty-handed when he came home

he set out for fame, for immortality
he won some fights, found and lost a friend
he came back bare-handed, to his people, his home
a caring and good king until his end

listen to the river

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

finding the flaw in the wise man's lectures
to break the circle of reincarnation
first seemed based on mere conjectures
but shall lead to your salvation

a sheltered life when you were younger
you've known the Brahman sophistication
lived with ascetics, bore the hunger
and practiced humble contemplation

listen to the river
hear its thousand voices
when it roars, when it whispers,
or rejoices
listen to the river
tell 'bout a thousand choices
while it roars, while it whispers,
and rejoices
listen to the river

you've been merchant, you've been lover
precious experience that you've acquired
though you've lived like undercover
you've known passion, you've known desire

listen to the river
hear its thousand voices
when it roars, when it whispers,
or rejoices
listen to the river
tell 'bout a thousand choices
while it roars, while it whispers,
and rejoices
listen to the river

learn from the ferryman
stay by the river
hear what it delivers
who searches he may never find
what's beyond his own thoughts
things beyond what's being taught

listen to the river
hear its thousand voices
when it roars, when it whispers,
or rejoices
listen to the river
tell 'bout a thousand choices
while it roars, while it whispers,
and rejoices
listen to the river

become aware of its holy sound
on your quest for your own ground

pardon me, Melanie

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

Melanie, please pardon me
if I caused you pain
Melanie, please pardon me
if your pleas were in vain

Melanie, please pardon me
if my words were too harsh
Melanie, please pardon me
if I hit you too hard

Melanie, you see
if it wasn't for your intransigence
I'd never have lost control

Melanie, please pardon me
if I made you cry
Melanie, please pardon me
if I caused your black eye

Melanie, please pardon me
if I have stained your rug
Melanie, please pardon me
if I have spilled your blood

Melanie, you see
if it wasn't for your intransigence
I'd never have lost control

Melanie, please pardon me
if I have smashed your head
Melanie, please pardon me
if I have caused your death

Melanie, you see
if it wasn't for your intransigence
I'd never have lost control

[spoken:]
gotta wrap you up real nicely
add some more weight to the package
and find me some place to dump it
fuck, what a mess
see what you're doin' to me

shall I live

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

shall I live
as the world's going under
shall I live
in a future that's void
while it rains
lightning and thunder
'til the earth
is fin'ly destroyed

how come
that just one single species
has the power
to end it for all
come o'r them
like the final disease
making sure
that the strongest will fall

shall I live
as the world's going under
shall I live
in a future that's void
while it rains
lightning and thunder
'til the earth
is fin'ly destroyed

in our time
we've created great wonders
in our time
we've changed the world
the last plague
is what we'll come under
for the forces
that we've unfurled

shall I live
as the world's going under
shall I live
in a future that's void
while it rains
lightning and thunder
'til the earth
is fin'ly destroyed

will we be devoured by the darkest night
will we be blinded by a blazing light
will we be burning in hellish fires
will we choke on our own desires

shall I live
as the world's going under
shall I live
in a future that's void
while it rains
lightning and thunder
'til the earth
is fin'ly destroyed

Spartacus

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

we broke through your lines
and taught your legions fear
when you thought us besieged
we attacked you from the rear

the rural hands we trained
prepared them for the battle
to defeat your mighty legions
and chase them just like cattle

if it wasn't for betrayal
you'd never have stood a chance
so you made me their hero
when you pierced me with your lance

the slaves you once abused
who worked your fields and mines
have learned there can be freedom
beyond your enemy lines

now you think you that can humble
the proud men they've become
and make an example of
who had fought like one

tied to their crosses
soiled, and half-decayed
there will remain the message
that they have conveyed

we will break through your lines
and teach your armies fear
when you'll think us besieged
we'll attack you from the rear

summer night

(Music/Words: Bernd Harmsen)

the sun is out, it's warm and bright
forget the cold, enjoy the light
summer fete - stay out at night
have some fun, it's all right
dance and music by torchlight
find a girl - hold her tight

warm summer night
everything feels all right
on a warm summer night

fun and parties everywhere
come out of your private lair
enjoy the night's warm summer air
your joy is doubled if it's shared
lay by the girl for who you care
touch her skin, sniff her hair

warm summer night ...

lying in your arm
nothing can do me harm
on a warm summer night

holidays by the sea
charge you with new energy
no time for trouble, here you're free
be who you've always wished to be
lie in the shadow of a tree
which guards your dreams and makes you see

warm summer night ...

I've surrendered to your charms
and leave my worries in your arms
your presence makes me believe
life can be a warm summer night

lying nude in the spray
on the beach of the cay
live your life your own way
never mind what others say
what feels good is okay
seize the night, seize the day

warm summer night ...

declare a young and pretty teen
for tonight your fairy queen
show her things she's never seen,
places where she's never been
these young cuties are so keen
to gain experience, being so green

warm summer night ...

From here on it's 'hypothetical folk' as the following lyrics have not been set to music at all or come with an altogether different genre (normally that would be Rock or Pop-Rock)

a place to live

the streets are deserted
big money has gone
nature's been perverted
destruction has won

industrial wastes
float towards the sea
a human wreck hastens
he's trying to flee

trying to catch a healthy dream
of a place where one could live
where between humanity
and nature there's a take and give

don't drink the water
don't breathe the air
this place is polluted
'cause nobody cared

trying to catch a healthy dream
of a place where one could live
where between humanity
and nature there's a take and give

bush fires

a people on the decline
a far misled crowd
a war that cannot be won
ideals, not beyond doubt
they're dealing with opinions
the truth is not allowed

the tide may be turning
while bush fires are burning
strong emotions churning
while bush fires are burning

there was talk of a crusade
its essence, though, is oil
on civilizations birthplace
they're wasting men and soil
not sure of what they're gaining
it's obvious what they spoil

the tide may be turning
while bush fires are burning
strong emotions churning
while bush fires are burning

when will they be learning
that bush fires are burning

by the seven seas

I'm blooming like a sprig in spring
breathing deeply I've come to life
I'm the bird that courts and sings
I am here to cheer and thrive

hov'ring o'r vast and fertile plains
abundance, richness, luxuries
I'm the sunshine when it rains
to lure you off your infancy

and I ride with the wind
and I howl with the storm
I'll calm down like a breeze
by the seven seas

I take my time 'cause life is brief
while I climb towards the crest
I'm gliding down as autumn leaf
provinding color and some rest

and I ride with the wind
and I howl with the storm
I'll calm down like a breeze
by the seven seas

come my time I'm the winter freeze
whispering secrets to the trees
I am tired, but I'm free
I'm free

and I rode with the wind
and I howled with the storm
I calmed down like a breeze
beyond the seven seas

Europa

you were picking wild flowers with your maids by the coast
when a wondrous milk-white bull caught your eye
a marvellous beauty - it let you get close
so gentle, so great, and not at all shy

caressing his flanks, his fur - so light
pastoral peace under blue skies
you dared to mount him, you wanted a ride
and feel his strength between your thighs

Europa
it's easy to fall in love with your
charm, your beauty, your youth
Europa
so confident, so self-assured
once the beloved one of Zeus

the bull slowly wandered toward the sea
jumped into the waves to carry you forth
you felt no fear, you did not plead
headed for Crete, far in the north

the God lifted his guise to show you his love
you gave in to him, half victim, half bride
he made you Crete's queen, guarding you from above
and you'd always fondly remember the ride

Europa
it's easy to fall in love with your
charm, your beauty, your youth
Europa
so confident, so self-assured
once the beloved one of Zeus

when you will have come into years
and you'll have reached quite different spheres
you'll still look beautiful and young
and you will speak in many tongues
while men enjoy your subtle charm
the God's preventing you from harm

Europa
it's easy to fall in love with your
charm, your beauty, your youth
Europa
so confident, so self-assured
once the beloved one of Zeus

God of the ants

I'm the God of tiny creatures
I decide 'bout life and death
I appoint their tiny preachers
they pray to me when goin' to bed

I'm the loving God
I'm the caring God
I'm the avenging God of the ants

I'm the Lord of ants and beetles
I'm the one they fear and praise
unbelieving can proove lethal
better that no doubts be raised

I'm the loving God
I'm the caring God
I'm the avenging God of the ants

I'm their fate and I'm their master
a single step can cause disaster
the blasphemous die much faster

I'm the loving God
I'm the caring God
I'm the avenging God of the ants

high expectations

we propagated free love, despised the bourgeois family
although we had enough to do struggling with our jealousy
freedom was alright as long it mainly was meant just for me

we had high expectations
were reaching for the stars
we did not think of marrying,
pot bellies, or posh cars.

we were proud to be surrounded by a mob of enemies,
mistrusted all authorities, would destroy all hierarchies
our overall ideal was a life in total anarchy

we had high expectations
were reaching for the stars
we did not think of marrying,
pot bellies, or posh cars.

we protested 'gainst a culture of conspicuous consumption
bein' able to live just on grass based on a large assumption
we had our time of love and peace, but soon we had to function

we had high expectations
were reaching for the stars
we did not think of marrying,
pot bellies, or posh cars.

the truth is simple and quite plain
our intentions all went down the drain
all our protests were in vain
nothing's left that would sustain

we had high expectations
were reaching for the stars
we did not think of marrying,
pot bellies, or posh cars.

how does it feel?

how does it feel to live in dirt and filth?
how does it feel to have a drunken mother?
how does it feel to have the rats as pets?
how does it feel when you don't know your father?

each day the dice are thrown anew,
each day the cards are dealt again
who'd take your chances if not you?
if you're not lucky - try again!

how is it eating from a silver dish?
how does it feel when you're the best at school?
how does it feel when you get all you wish
and everything's falling in your lap?

each day the dice are thrown anew,
each day the cards are dealt again
yesterday's winners may be today's fools.
but who could keep you from tryin' again?

once a year

walked through the chestnut alley of my childhood days
like on a railway track yet again I'd found my way
towards the frightful place of my childhood fears,
childhood nightmares, horrors, childhood tears

though once a year when the chestnuts bloomed
my life for once did not seem doomed
and I felt so light and I felt so free
cause I knew they only bloomed for me

here the big neighbour boys used to torture me
here stood the house where I never liked to be
where at night I heard the daemons sneer
and horrid nightmare creatures nursed my fears

yet once a year when the chestnuts bloomed
my life for once did not seem doomed
and I felt so light and I felt so free
cause I knew they only bloomed for me

just once a year the chestnuts only bloom for me
I feel the warmth of the sun and seem to smell the sea
and I feel at home like I rarely ever feel
the horrid past - today it feels unreal

just once a year when the chestnuts bloom
my life for once does not seem doomed
and I feel so light and I feel so free
cause I know they only bloom for me

our memories will never go

did you think that you lived in a computer game
did you think that it would not hurt
that there'd be a chance to revert
or was it just that you would come to fame

shooting kids in their heads - would you gather points
to reach a new level of play
the higher the more you would slay
is that what you'd learned in the gaming scene's joints

I'm afraid, we'll never know
that the truth will never show
and our memories will never go away

while spilling brain matter, while steppin' in blood
what had gone on in your mind
had you been dumb, deaf, and blind
or were you proud of yourself and felt like a stud

I'm afraid, we'll never know
that the truth will never show
and our memories will never go away

I checked the board that you were said to have used
for announcing your shooting spree
I was appalled by what I would see
stumblin' over that Nazi bullshit it oozed

If I shed a tear
I won't shed it for you
although I'm tryin' to understand
what you had been up to

I'm afraid, we'll never know
that the truth will never show
and our memories will never go away

Phoenix

in times of mourning and sorrow
without faith,
times of fear, despair, and cries

although all hope may tomorrow
go up in flames
nothing's lost when the Phoenix dies

and yet again you will see
that it will rise - yes, it will rise
from the ashes

noble bird, comforting sight
brilliant colours, graceful flight
wheels in the sky, spreaded wings
viewing the world as it sings
such wondrous chants are its cries
that they'd bring tears to men's eyes

although all hope may seem to
go up in flames
nothing's lost when the Phoenix dies

and yet again you will see
that it will rise - yes, it will rise
from the ashes

it's roosting in the tree of life
that would shake when it'd take flight
and spread the seed of all known plants
and spread the riches of the land
the bird beholds the fertile fields
and the earth it shields

although all hope may seem to
go up in flames
nothing's lost when the Phoenix dies

and yet again you will see
that it will rise - yes, it will rise
from the ashes

it has lived and witnessed change
and all the wisdom of old age
it's gathered in its course of life
it has seen emperors rise,
reigns pass, and hopes soar,
times of peace, and times of war

although it's burning in the flames
it will stand up and live again
although it's burning in the flames
it will stand up and live again
will stand up and live again

promised land

you were marked out
for the big venture
to go and try your luck
travelling over the sea

young, healthy, strong
you could be the one
who once could support
the whole family tree

all of your family
had scraped together
what little they could find
to pay the smuggler's fee

venture to the promised land
to share its overflowing wealth
work and prospects with no end
as long as you are in good health
venture to the promised land

a dark and misty night
a vessel with no name
overloaded to the brim
to carry desperates abroad

'cross the rough sea
in a moonless night
and all were sick
a few went overboard

venture to the promised land
to share its overflowing wealth
work and prospects with no end
as long as you are in good health
venture to the promised land

doing illegal work
under plastic foils
at the Spanish coast
for a starvation wage

your hopes are shattered
and you feel cheated
yet there's no choice
but swallowing your rage

welcome to the promised land
create its overflowing wealth
work and hardship with no end
as long as you are in good health
welcome to the promised land

rule of thumb

you beat up your wife when you felt like it
you bullied, threatened, abused her
at last she broke out after one of your fits
to escape from oppression and torture

you pestered your brother-in-law to find out
where your wife might be in hiding
he would not reveal her whereabouts
so you seized him to get him confiding

you punched him hard because you knew he
knew,
broke his nose, tore his nails, yet still
he'd said no word when he died off on you
though you had never intended to kill

by rule of thumb
a severed thumb stickin' out
will mean thumbs down
in the end for you

this tiny part
of your victim's corpse
makes your whole home town
point a finger at you

you butchered your victim quite thoroughly
and disposed of your slaughterhouse waste
who'd have thought that a crow eventually
would find his thumb to her taste

yet lose her precious prey in mid-air
while bein' captured on CCTV

it dropped right on a crowded public square
giving voice to a silent man's plea

his thumb providing the only proof
of what the police had conjectured
so you've got no choice to stand aloof
or hold the alibi you'd manufactured

by rule of thumb
his severed thumb stickin' out
will mean thumbs down
in the end for you

this tiny part
of your victim's corpse
makes your whole home town
point a finger at you

a crow as a messenger from the beyond
makes you look stupid, makes you feel conned
you thought you were cunning, but now you look
dumb
bein' given the finger by a dead man's thumb

by rule of thumb
his severed thumb stickin' out
will mean thumbs down
in the end for you

this tiny part
of your victim's corpse
makes your whole home town
point a finger at you

summer solstice night

midsummer morning, and the first sun ray
hits the centre of the shrine
all is well 'cause yet again
the sage correctly read the sign

this year has reached its peak
tonight we'll celebrate the fete
of the summer solstice night

bonfires are burning
and the dances have begun
we will sing and dance
until the early morning sun

this year has reached its peak
tonight we celebrate the fete
of the summer solstice night

life is thriving
and wild oats are being sown
come next winter
then the young men will have grown

this year has reached its peak
tonight we celebrate the fete
of the summer solstice night

Vanity

Vanity, you do look old
the smooth skin of your youth's got definitely stained
age spots and wrinkles where once a proud beauty reigned
there's no charm and no grace
in this old worn out face
you've lost your good looks - there is no denying
the time you've wasted is why you should be crying
Vanity, it feels so cold

Vanity, no use for gold
what once seemed important is of no use today
riches and elegance won't serve you on your way
let the past be the past
gold and silver won't last
your heirs will fight over what you will have left them
where you're headed to no-one will care for your gems
Vanity, you had been told

when you look in the mirror
you'll spot a disturbing shape
like a skull grinning at you
knowing there's no escape

Vanity, you look forlorn
you've had all the chances a human life provides
never you seized them, instead you swept them aside
you can't call back your youth
you can't fight off the truth
your fight against time's been lost from the beginning
when the last bell chimes you'll know there is no winning
Vanity, why should you scorn

Vanity
Vanity

Violet

in sleepless, restless nights
she tosses and she turns
is it some nameless fears
or that she just yearns
for things still opaque

she likes to touch herself
so she can feel the thrill
but the thoughts and images
keep making her chill
of what may be at stake

Violet in first bloom
it's spring and it's soon to pick you
old hunter's smelling blood
patiently awaits his time
for the perfect shot

some dirty old bastard
will not yet contend
himself with the notion
that each life must end
while other lives thrive

he likes to touch himself
so he can feel the thrill
but he feels the urge
to fight, and to kill,
make love, and survive

Violet in first bloom ...

she presents herself
in a sexy short skirt
her lips are painted red
she enjoys alert
if lecherous stares

some mature guys flattery
is making her blush
he is such a kind man
someone you can trust
for an invitation

Violet in full bloom
still spring yet now it's time to pick you
old hunter has smelled blood
he knows he's waited long enough
for the final shot